

***One Night* and Political Theatre**

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

Since Ancient Grecian times, theatre has been interwoven with public and political life. This thesis will cover my own experience in political theatre, detailing my involvement in an on-campus devised show entitled *One Night*: starting with an overview of devising, continuing to the large-group process, zooming in on my personal input and research, a short summary of the production itself, and critique of my work. From there, I will discuss the styles we used in a more general context and in relation to other pieces of political theatre. This will lead to forms of audience engagement and a best practices analysis of political theatre in the contemporary world.

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One Night and Political Theatre

Since Ancient Grecian times, theatre has been interwoven with public and political life. Sophocles' *Antigone* questions prevailing ideas about authority and civil obedience, not to mention gender, with a female protagonist who goes against the edict of the king to do what she believes is right (Ferguson 44-46). In the seventeenth century, Molière created religious and political controversy with his play *Tartuffe*, a satirical comedy that critiqued insincere piety in the church, an establishment holding a great amount of power in that time (Cardullo 175-6). In the case of Molière, art also enabled him to send his message in an era of governmental censorship and oppression. Theatre is a medium that allows us to navigate social issues in a way dry rhetoric or debate typically cannot. This is especially beneficial to political theatre, the type of theatre I will be discussing. The definition of political theatre can vary in its breadth, but I will be defining "political theatre" as theatre *productions* that seek to incite social change or address current social issues, whether or not they actually push any specific solutions.

Many different terms are used to describe this type of theatre: social justice theatre, political theatre, activist theatre, community-based theatre, and so on, each with different nuances and connotations. However, for the sake of this paper, "social justice theatre" and "political theatre" will be used interchangeably. Social justice theatre can be produced in a variety of ways: through devising, a process that starts essentially from scratch, but works toward an end goal, from existing modern scripts with political messages, or through older plays that are not necessarily

political as we have defined them, but are re-imagined and produced in a way that focuses on current social issues.

For example, Harvey Theatre's production of Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* in New York City takes a key scene in a public assembly and introduces modern issues to the discussion, inviting the audience to act as the public. The whole play was modernized, but this scene specifically brought contemporary issues to the forefront (Isherwood). The key is in the goal of the artists, something that is sometimes painstakingly spelled out and sometimes more subtle.

This thesis will cover my own experience in political theatre, detailing my involvement in an on-campus devised show: starting with an overview of devising, continuing to the large-group process, zooming in on my personal input and research, a short summary of the production itself, and critique of my work. From there, I will discuss the styles we used in a more general context and in relation to other pieces of political theatre. This will lead to forms of audience engagement and a best practices analysis of political theatre in the contemporary world.

As mentioned above, I have recently had the opportunity to work on a piece of political theatre at a collegiate level. This piece was a devised show entitled *One Night* that dealt with issues of sexual assault. Devised pieces do not begin with a prewritten script but instead typically start with an idea, theme, or basic story and use collaboration between group members as the process for all aspects of production. This is not to say that traditional theatre is not collaborative, but that devised collaboration works through overlap in roles as each participant does more

than one individual part (e.g. not only writing, directing, acting, costuming, etc). One of the benefits to this is that it can help break down the hierarchical structure that sometimes pervades traditional theatre (Perry 65, 67).

While devised theatre is a broad and evolving term that has existed in many forms over the years, the beginnings of devised theatre as we know it today began in the mid-twentieth century with a few prominent forerunners, such as the Living Theatre, Théâtre du Soleil, and Open Theatre, all of which began producing written scripts and moved into collaboratively devised pieces in the 1960s. The Living Theatre started with avant-garde contemporary political pieces by playwrights like Brecht, while Théâtre du Soleil began by reimagining more classic pieces. Open Theatre focused on actor growth, replacing typical production rehearsals with thematic and improvisational workshops to develop characters. (Kennedy 2003).

Ours was not quite a “pure” devised piece (if there is such a thing), as we did end up assigning roles and dividing work in a more precise way. Also, while some of the actors were also part of the creative process from the beginning, others auditioned for their parts later on, after scripts were more solidified, putting them in more traditional actor roles.

My involvement with the project began at a meeting for Busted Space Theatre Company, a student group at Ball State University. One of the board members brought up a sexual assault prevention project she would be starting through a grant from Purdue University. The project had open parameters, with the main stipulation being the topic of sexual assault. All who were interested in the

project met November 4th, 2014 to discuss ideas. There were about fifteen present. We decided to write a show based largely on our own experiences and passions within the realm of sexual assault and what we found most relevant to us and our community. We also laid out different ways each of us would be involved based on our interests and experience, whether it be writing, directing, performing, research, marketing, etc. We closed the meeting with a solid base of ideas and topics from which to work.

We met a week later and divided into smaller groups based on topic interest. The topics we had narrowed down included male and societal gaze and objectification, LGBTQ+ perspectives, male survivors, physical assault, media influence, boundaries and definitions of sexual assault (later dropped from the show), and the culture behind walking home alone at night. The media group was also a dramaturgical group, focused on the research behind the topics and overarching themes, especially where media was involved. As a large group, we decided to explore these topics through a series of vignettes set during the night of a party. We used a variety of theatrical styles, to be discussed further later on. The exception was the topic of media, which was not directly addressed in a vignette, but through lobby display and pre-show slides. That being said, the effects of media were present in multiple vignettes. I was part of the male and societal gaze and objectification group as well as the media and dramaturgy group.

We had the foundation set for our project; now began the content creation. I was in a group with two others for the topic of objectification. Our group came up

with a basic plot for a piece in which men objectified women in everyday conversation. From there, we set out to write the script. Each group needed some sort of script or short description (for nonverbal pieces) of their scene in order to hold auditions and decide how many cast members were needed. I drafted up a preliminary script, and from there, my partners took over editing the script and, later, directing the actors.

Another common aspect of devising absent from our process (at least as a whole) was that of improvisational exercises. Devised pieces typically come together through a process of research, discussion, and different activities meant to explore the subject and create a relevant piece (Perry 68). As a large group we collaborated to find the specific subject matter and structure for our show, but the vignette format allowed us to break up into more specific groups on our own time to create pieces with whatever methods we deemed appropriate.

Once all the pieces had been put together, we as a whole determined how many of us would be performing in the show and how many we would need. We held auditions for the remaining performance roles, adding a new group of artists to the process. The project continued to be shaped with new input from the actors over the rehearsal process. We kept the sets and costuming minimal.

I also worked with one other person covering media and dramaturgy. Our goal was to design a lobby and pre-show experience that immediately engaged audience members with the topics of the play and prepared them for the show, keeping media in mind as a theme. One of the pieces specifically used social and

news media as a centerpiece in the work, focusing on how male victims of statutory rape were portrayed and discussed. In this piece, slides of news article titles and social media commentary were to be projected on the screen during the scene. For this, we needed to find a projector, which fell into the line of dramaturgical work. The work of a dramaturg can vary from production to production, but for smaller groups there tends to be more responsibilities.

Since we were already using a projector, we decided to also utilize it for a pre-show slideshow. We thought this would be especially effective considering that it would be visible while the audience was sitting and waiting for the show to start. We decided to do a slide for each vignette theme with discussion questions in between. I designed the introductory slides and the ones for two of the vignettes, and my partner designed the other three. We worked with each other as well as my academic advisor to make sure these slides were engaging, thought provoking, and educational.

The topics of media and objectification tied together well in my research. Media both imitates and creates cultural standards, and media that objectifies women is reflective of these standards. The ever-increasing presence of media in our society makes the analysis of the messages it sends, both implicit and explicit, that much more important. Oxford's Dictionary of Media and Communication defines objectification as "the dehumanizing reduction of a person... to the status of a thing, an anonymous body, or a fetishized body part" (Chandler and Munday). In her documentary series *Killing Us Softly*, Jean Kilbourne discusses how

objectification in media can lead to violence against women. When women are portrayed merely as sex objects, they are valued only in what their bodies can provide. This theoretical, and in advertising, sometimes literal separation of body and humanity strips women of power and strips consumers (especially men) of empathy toward these women (*Killing Us Softly*, Kilbourne). Because of this, media objectification and sexual assault are connected in a very real way.

The term “objectification” itself is not uncommon, especially in collegiate environments, but the deeper issues behind and larger implications of it are less known. Because of this, I began the slideshow with this foundational information to help explain how it related to sexual assault. I continued with examples of objectifying advertisements. These were drawn from a collage I created that was on display in the lobby. The collage contained a variety of print advertisements that objectified women. Often, any image of a woman scantily clad or portrayed in a sexual way is considered to be objectifying, but a sexual portrayal of women alone is not necessarily objectifying. And on the other hand, a portrayal of women that is not inherently sexual can still be objectifying.

For example, the below image is two women in swimsuits, apparel that can certainly be worn in nonsexual situations.



However, the cut of the ad, in particular, the choice to not show the models' faces, reduces them to their body parts, in dehumanizing them. The human brain has greater activity when viewing faces than with shapes, plants, or even stomachs, arms and hips. There is actually a specific area of the brain for recognizing faces (the fusiform face area) separate from other objects (Kanwisher, McDermott, and Chun 4302). I used this image in my slideshow, asking questions about the effect of only seeing partial bodies in the audience members' sense of humanity for the models. I also asked what the audience thought the purpose of the models was. Alongside it, I also used the below image, a more blatant example of objectification.



This was a more cut-and-dry example of the use of female body parts purely as sexual objects for male consumption (note that the product is a *men's* fragrance). However, advertisements can still show women in their entirety and send dangerous messages. The below Dolce & Gabbana advertisement shows a woman in a submissive position, surrounded by men in powerful, aggressive positions.



This shows a woman fully represented physically, but represented as someone to be dominated by men. Images like these perpetuate expectations of women as submissive, especially in sexual situations. While this advertisement is an obviously example, other subtle markers can indicate submission that we do not always recognize on a conscious level. Social scientists who analyze media such as advertisements have used markers such as position relative to others (e.g. in the background, lower down, et cetera), physical posture (e.g hunched, head bowed, turned away), and childlike dress or pose (Hovlan 893). According to accumulation theory, concepts seen repeatedly and across multiple distributors of media over time can have a serious effect on individual and group concepts of normalcy.

Applying that to these advertisements, constantly seeing women as sexually available or at least sexually submissive creates expectations for interactions with women in everyday life (Merskin 120). With this advertisement, I asked about who held the power in it. I followed with asking what the danger in these advertisements were. My co-dramaturg and I were careful to always ask questions in the slides, to keep an open dialogue and stray from the appearance of “preachiness.”

I also worked on the slide for the scene addressing the culture of fear behind women walking home alone at night. For this one I took input from our director, who thought a link to something familiar would help audience members connect. She suggested the recently-popular “10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman” YouTube video, a fairly self-explanatory video in which a woman walks, as implied, for ten hours through New York City, secretly recording all the catcalls she received. In the section beforehand, my co-dramaturg gave the example of the hashtag #RapeCultureIsWhen as use of social media as an activist space, asking questions about how social media can be effectively used. This led in perfectly to the “10 Hours” video, since it was uploaded to YouTube, a form of social media. I collected screenshots from the video with audio subtitles and put them on the slideshow. While the piece in *One Night* did not address catcalling, this gave another example of how women are rarely afforded any authority or autonomy in public spaces. Since this was the last section in the slideshow, I expanded the questions to apply not only to the topic at hand, but the topics of the show as a whole, asking

“Where do you see things like this happening in your life?” and “What can you do to change things?”



The lobby display included, as mentioned earlier, a collage of advertisements that objectified women as well as a notebook where people could write their most unique attribute.



The latter was mostly the work of my partner, who provided the notebook as well as many different colored crayons to give people a chance to express themselves as much as they desired. We collected a few examples beforehand, and my partner stayed outside before the show to explain to anyone who had questions. We tried to keep our question open (“What is your most unique attribute?”), so anyone could feel comfortable writing in it, feeling empowered without worrying about appearing self-absorbed. As for the collage, I wanted to create a piece that would have immediate visual impact without immediately weighing it down with text. I also wanted to create a connection and reference point for the examples in the slideshow.

The show itself took place in the setting of the night of a college party. This helped clarify and connect the individual pieces as well as provided a relevant and familiar setting for our audience. This also helped us choose our title. *One Night* began with the vignette on objectification that I took part in creating. Each vignette covered a different topic. Ours, which has been described briefly already, was the first piece chronologically in the performance.



Going with our setting, we decided to begin before the party with a group of young men waiting on their female friends to arrive so they could all go together. As they wait, their discussion turns to the women, specifically, what they deemed their most attractive physical traits. As each trait was named, the actress to whom it corresponded would walk

onstage with a sign bearing that trait and hold it up so it obscured her face.

This connected to the pre-show slides and larger ideas of objectification. After each girl had been objectified, they turned the signs over to reveal qualities the actresses had written that were not physical. This humanized the characters and created a more empowering experience for the piece itself as well as the actresses involved.

The rest of the show will be told in less detail, as I was not as personally involved in the creation and direction of the other vignettes; however, each piece had incredible amounts of effort, thought, and creativity behind it. The pieces will also be discussed in greater detail further below in the style section. The second vignette was a movement piece (no spoken lines) that followed the experience of an LGBTQ+ person as they struggled to find acceptance. After that, a vignette portrayed young men discussing a recent news story involving male survivors of statutory rape. Social media was woven into this piece as headlines and commentary were displayed onscreen.

The fourth piece was a dance piece portraying a male and female who at first connected, but as the female became more uncomfortable, the situation escalated. The fifth and final piece began in the aftermath of an argument that reveals one of the women has begun to walk home alone to escape harassment. The piece then



dives into an internal monologue that comments on larger issues of the fear women have being alone at night, from college campuses to big cities. The piece ends on a positive note, with one of her friends catching up with her so she is no longer alone.

In keeping in line with our goal to educate the audience, we had a couple speakers talk for 1-2 minutes between vignettes on resources in the Ball State and Muncie community. The speakers were from the university Office of Victim Services and the local women's shelter A Better Way. After the show, the representative from the Office of Victim Services led a talk-back, during which we discussed the topics of the show.

In critiquing my work, there were several areas that could have been improved. As with any project, making contacts and requests very early on is key. When first considering potential talk-back hosts, the project header and I did research on various campus and local resources. On my end, I considered various groups that had done similar presentations in the past, such as the Counseling Center, which had a specific outreach team dedicated to educating on a variety of topics, including sexual assault. I went in person to the Counseling Center and asked around there and was given an e-mail. I sent a message, and eventually received a response that more information was needed and that there would not be a decision until the weekly meeting. The Counseling Center seemed very willing and interested in the project, but the time of their meetings and the short term notice gave them little availability. This was a valuable lesson in that the time you begin a contact

process is often still long before the appropriate people are contacted and decisions are made. Fortunately, the Office of Victim Services had an available graduate student, contacted by the project header, and Busted Space now has multiple contacts for future productions where their services might be of use. Even when situations do not work out as planned, making connections is still a valuable way to reach out as an organization.

As far as the research and more traditional dramaturgical work, I think it would have been helpful to have more discussion with the artists working on each of the vignettes. While there was a lot of thought put into the lobby display, it could have gone even further to address specific issues brought up in other vignettes. Looking back, it seems bent toward the objectification theme, with nothing directly addressing LGBT+ issues, issues of male survivors, etc. A more thoroughly integrated lobby display could have helped tie the show together, rather than just drawing from one aspect (albeit a fairly overarching aspect).

As discussed earlier, “One Night” integrated multiple different theatrical styles. There is no “right” or “wrong” style of political theatre. Although it has different goals than other forms of theatre, political theatre is still an artform, subject to the creative process and the endless results that can come from it. Each style has its own benefits and reasoning. In the following section, I will go over the general styles we used in our production.

The first and third vignettes used realism in conjunction with other elements. The basic idea of realism has been a standard for many years in theatre as a whole

and even political theatre. It has the benefits of being familiar to audiences as well as a strong body of work to build off. Studies show that viewing actor portrayal of various group members (including marginalized groups) can increase empathy for those groups on the part of audience members (Iverson 66). However, as political theatre has evolved, many pieces and artists are moving away from straightforward realism in every aspect. This movement away is present in our pieces. As for the first vignette on objectification, while the lines were written in everyday language and the situation was common, it slipped into theatricality when the women held up the signs with their physical traits. In the postmodern world, the prevalence of multiple perspectives and gray moral areas can often lead to trouble in portraying events in such a straightforward way as traditional theatre does. Some even argue that realism brings with it a sense of authority that limits perspective, that by portraying events in one simple way, with the audience as observer, they subliminally declare that that is the only way (Schevill). Reality is more than what one person can see and hear, even from an outside, fourth-wall perspective. This is true both on an individual level, as each person in a situation experiences it in a slightly different way, and on a larger level. As we have more access to the world around us, we recognize that our actions do not occur in a vacuum, but are part of a larger experience. Purely realistic theatre can limit that experience (Sellars & Marranca 49-50). In the first vignette, our inclusion of the female friends with their signs veered the style from realism and connected the words of the boys not only directly to the stories of their friends but also larger issues of objectification. These

conversations may seem spontaneous and unrelated to any outside influences, but they are driven by larger cultural forces and affect the way women are perceived and treated.

The third vignette, which focused on male survivors of sexual assault, was realistic in tone, but added in projections and social media, again bringing in outside elements to create context and a more holistic perspective. Screen captures of news headlines and social media commentary were used as a backdrop to the scene. The actors actually drew many of their lines from social media commentary, integrating anonymous online opinions with in-person reality. This provided commentary on the way people communicate online. By showing people actually speaking face-to-face, without the cover of faceless anonymity, the words people use become available for critique and response and subject to the social . On the other hand, speaking social media commentary as lines brings to life the raw reality of people's true opinions. Social media is an increasingly prevalent aspect of life in the twenty-first century, and the ways it affects communication are therefore increasingly relevant. The comparatively faceless aspect of the internet combined with inflated sense of self (and need to defend that sense) from immersion in social media often leads to a much more combative and disrespectful nature online (Bernstein). The dangerous effects of this combined with issues of hypermasculinity create a hostile setting for males who are victims of sexual assault, highlighted in this piece.

While some vignettes used scripts, others were more movement-based pieces. Many exercises used in devised theatre are movement-based. Joseph Chaikin, founder of the Open Theatre, discussed the limits of relying on speech and words to explore a theme or situation. He said that words made complex situations and characters into something clear-cut and logically explained. Movement, he said, was a way to “understand the unexpressed” (Chaikin 193). In *One Night*, one of our movement-based pieces detailed the experience of an LGBT+ person navigating friendships and facing rejection. The piece never verbally specified that one individual was LGBT+, except in the program, giving the experience a universal quality for anyone who had been rejected by others.

Beyond the actual generative experience of political theatre, the productions of political theatre can reach outside traditional theatre boundaries. One way to expand the production experience is through community partners. Theatre is by nature collaborative and communal, and engaging with local organizations can strengthen the impact a group has. Community partners can take inspiration or issues brought up in a show and provide a tangible way to get involved or understand the situation as it applies on a local level. Many not-for-profit (and even for-profit) organizations also have community partners simply from a financial standpoint.

For example, in the fall of 2013, Washington, D.C.-based Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company partnered with Urban Institute, a nonprofit research organization, to host a discussion one night after *Detroit*, a show that addresses

issues of economic struggle. The financial knowledge and expertise brought by Urban provided real-life application to a situation portrayed onstage (Levins). Community partners can provide diverse perspectives and resources, lend credibility, and create another relating point for audience members who might feel distant from theatre and theatre artists (Fredland 108-109).

For *One Night*, we partnered with the Office of Victim Services and A Better Way in Muncie. Along with our educational goals, we did not ask for money from them, but instead had representatives speak, offering their services. Office of Victim Services was directly relevant as it was a resource for those who had been sexually assaulted. The representative provided information on what a person's options were in experiences of assault. She also talked about the issue of consent.

Visits and support from community partners show that, ideally, the impact of theatre does not end after the show is over, but incites change and dialogue. One way to facilitate this dialogue is through these post-show talkbacks. This allows the audience to, firstly, process the material verbally, asking questions about confusing moments. It also allows the audience to make real contributions to larger discussions about social issues. Depending on the show content, these discussions can include potential solutions or efforts to aid in problems that pervade communities. Collaboraction Theatre Company created the evolving piece "Crime Scene" to address issues of violence in Chicago. After performing a piece addressing it, they host "inspired Town Hall Discussion[s]" in which community members can give input on their opinions, suggestions, and thoughts ("Crime Scene Chicago: Let

Hope Rise”)] For *One Night*, we hosted a talkback facilitated by the Office of Victim Services representative, during which we simply went through each vignette and talked about what stood out to us or applied to our lives.

Audiences can also be engaged before the show begins. This is commonly done through lobby displays, especially interactive ones. They provide a baseline of information for audience members to determine their participation in the show. Sometimes, as in our case with *One Night*, they can also provide an opportunity for them to connect personally with the subject matter of the show. This helps break down barriers between artist and audience, moving the audience out of the spectator role into one with more agency from the start (Prendergast 95-96, 102).

Audience involvement before and after shows is fairly common; it is also fairly open and voluntary in its scope, e.g. audience members can breeze past a lobby display or leave before a talk-back begins. It also allows the play to exist in its own world during the show, even if that world is discussed in depth outside of it. However, audience involvement during actual performances breaks down fourth-wall barriers and creates a level of connection with the actual performance that is rarely found. One of the more influential forms of this is Theatre of the Oppressed, created by Augusto Boal. He was inspired by Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, an approach to the education of Brazilian peasants that involved self-empowerment and internal assessment and expansion of existing knowledge outside of traditional classroom environments. One of these nontraditional educational environments was the performance space, which Augusto Boal used in

theatre of the oppressed, a type of theatre that engages audience members, giving them a voice in the process of creating theatre. Similar to Freire's critique of educational systems that simply fill students with information from outside authorities, Boal critiqued the passive, spectator role normally assigned to audience members (Cohen-Cruz 124-5).

In *Theatre of the Oppressed*, audience members are asked to participate in improvisational exercises, typically involving a situation of oppression. They view one situation, and then are asked to re-enact the situation with a different result, one they think would be more appropriate. However, even outside of traditional theatrical settings, Boal involved his audience, sometimes without their knowledge. Some pieces took place in public spaces and involved both actors and unwitting citizens present, as the actors improvised ways to include "audience" members in the piece. His work addressed social ills both through the message of the pieces, but through individual participation in these pieces. Theatre was not only for observation, but also for participation (Pottlitzer 5-6, Lavender 32). In *One Night*, we did not have in-show audience participation, but it is an option to consider for future productions. With any divergence from traditional theatre, there is the practical issue of audience response. No matter the critique of the fourth wall, it remains the most familiar to audience members.

Social justice theatre has taken hold in today's world with a few commonalities arising. It finds its power when organizations producing it have a deep understanding of the issue they wish to address, are specific in their goals for

the production, make deliberate efforts to involve the audience personally, taking advantage of the live and collective experience of theatre.

Collaboraction's "Crime Scene" piece mentioned earlier integrates research on recent crime statistics and violent news stories, both in their lobby beforehand and even updating stories within the show itself ("Crime Scene: the Next Chapter"). Research is a huge component of their work, giving them a solid base to explore the trickier aspects of violence in Chicago. For *One Night*, we did a lot of research on sexual assault, drawing from news stories, statistics (at one point a character repeats to herself that "An American is sexually assaulted every two minutes. Nine out of ten survivors are women."), and social studies such as work on rape culture to create a thorough and educational piece.

Specificity in goals is another important element in political theatre. Goals should be specific but achievable. Interwoven with the idea of goals and success is the question of target audience. Sharing a message with people who agree with that message is comfortable. It also makes it more difficult to determine a measurable outcome. While theatre can certainly be used as a rallying point for advocates and activists to continue in their inspiration and receive encouragement (Kirby), there is danger in only "preaching to the choir," as it can create complacency. On the other hand, creating a piece that seeks to change minds, especially on political issues, can be an intimidating endeavor. In any case, beginning work on a piece by discussing measurable outcomes can help guide the process in terms of target audience, and depending on if it is devised or not, the layout of the show itself.

For example, the collegiate theatre troupe WildActs began a project in which they sought to create a piece about marriage equality in light of local bills, both upcoming and already passed. They started creating a piece solely for college students, but re-evaluated their approach once they discussed their goal to affect those whose opinions might not already be in line with theirs and who could have potential political impact. On a fairly liberal college campus, your average student did not fit this criteria. They decided to perform at a meeting for Rotarians, groups of people who had a better chance of making impact and whose opinions could be more conservative. (Kaye 55-61). *One Night*, was created with grant monies, and part of the requirements were that it was an educational production for college students, so we had a very clear target audience from the start. We were very intentional about catering our message to college students. This also shaped how we approached our topics, since broader issues of sexual assault can have more specific applications in collegiate settings (e.g. party culture).

When an audience attends a show, they are automatically part of it in some sense or another. Their physical presence affects the performance. Political theatre often takes full advantage and makes something subliminal into something more obvious. This gives agency to audience members, putting them in a place where their voices can be heard. Methods for this more deliberate approach been discussed above in the Audience Involvement section. *One Night* did not have any audience involvement during the actual show, but did host a talk-back that allowed the audience to discuss their thoughts. We also had a notebook in which they could

write in the lobby beforehand. In the future, it could be exciting to integrate a way the audience could be involved during the actual show.

Our world is too complex to be able to say with certainty that some larger social change because one production was performed. But in smaller increments, we can address issues and plant seeds that have a real effect. As is typical, the most effective methods are not the easiest. Continually researching and educating yourself to create honest pieces, specifying your goals in production, and reaching out to your audience in deliberate ways are all goals that are not simple or unchallenging, but are certainly worth it. In *One Night*, we took great effort to research and reach out to our audience during overall production

As we continue into the murky world of the twenty-first century, the medium of theatre will evolve with the world around it. And as political and social problems continue to pervade our society, theatre will continue to attack them in a variety of ways. Pushing the lines of what theatre can do and be, balanced with specific and achievable goals can pave the way for real change. With *One Night*, we tackled sexual assault on one college campus. It was a small piece of the world, but we were able to leave our mark on it and contribute to the dialogue within it. There will never be worldwide agreement, but the diversity of views is not only a marker of the present times, but also what makes it such an exciting time. And theatre has a vibrant and relevant place in that excitement.

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